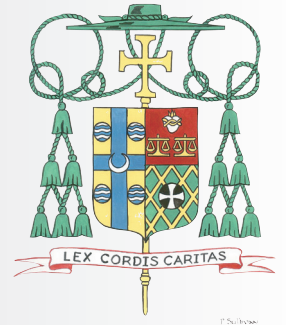




LEX CORDIS CARITAS

The law of the heart is love

Bishop Thomas John Paprocki
Ninth Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Springfield in Illinois



Young people need the Holy Spirit at an early age

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

Previously we saw that the fifth declaration of our fourth diocesan synod addresses the life-long catechetical formation needed to prepare people to be disciples of our Lord and stewards of his creation. This relates to the proper sequence and age for receiving the sacraments of initiation, which is addressed in the sixth declaration of the fourth diocesan synod: "The sacraments of Christian initiation shall be offered in the proper sequence (baptism, confirmation and Eucharist) for children as well as for adults. To promote discipleship and stewardship as a way of life from an early age, those who are baptized as infants are to receive the sacraments of confirmation and Eucharist at about the age of reason, which in this diocese will normally be in their third grade of elementary school, after they have been properly prepared and have made sacramental confession."

This sixth declaration is in keeping with canon 891 of the *Code of Canon Law*, which states, "The sacrament of confirmation is to be conferred on the faithful at about the age of discretion unless the conference of bishops determines another age or there is danger of death or in the judgment of the minister a grave cause urges otherwise." Reflecting the diversity of pastoral practices in the United States, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops decreed in 2002 that "the sacrament of confirmation

in the Latin rite shall be conferred between the age of discretion and about 16 years of age, within the limits determined by the diocesan bishop and with regard for the legitimate exceptions given in canon 891."

“Our youth face many temptations from the world around them Delaying their full initiation into the church until adolescence serves to deprive them of the grace they need at a crucial time in their lives.”

Discretion refers to the ability to make free acts of the will by which a person becomes morally responsible for his or her actions. In 1910, the Sacred Congregation of the Discipline of the Sacraments, with the approval of Pope Pius X, decreed that the "age of discretion, both for confession and for Holy Communion, is the time when a child begins to reason, that is, about the seventh year, more or less. From that time on begins the obligation of fulfilling the precept of both confession and Communion." This is reflected in the current *Code of Canon Law*, where canon 97, §2 says

that "one is presumed to have the use of reason with the completion of the seventh year," while canon 914 states that "children who have reached the use of reason are to receive their first Holy Communion as early as possible, preceded by sacramental confession."

This decree said nothing about the age for confirmation. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in paragraphs 1285 and 1306 affirms confirmation as the completion of baptism. The ancient tradition of the church regards confirmation as the second of the three stages of Christian initiation, the conclusion of which is reception of first holy Communion.

The transition to the restored order of the sacraments of initiation and their completion by the age of discretion in our diocese will take time and preparation. I have appointed a committee of clergy and laity to propose plans for this transition accordingly.

Restoring the original sequence of baptism, confirmation and Eucharist, in that order, with the latter two sacraments being received in third grade, shifts the focus of religious education for older children from sacramental preparation to formation for discipleship and stewardship as a way of life. Service projects, for example, can still be done by adolescents, but they are to be understood not as requirements to be completed in order to be confirmed, but as the way that fully initiated Christians live out their baptismal commitment by serving others.

Moreover, confirmation is correctly



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understood theologically as primarily the action of the Holy Spirit, whose gifts of grace are imparted in this sacrament, not as some sort of graduation from religious education or rite of passage to adult maturity. Our youth face many temptations from the world around them, many of these no farther away than their smartphone. Delaying their full initiation into the church until adolescence serves to deprive them of the grace

they need at a crucial time in their lives. Young people need the grace of the Holy Spirit at an early age to help them resist these temptations and lead holy and virtuous lives as followers of Jesus Christ.

May God give us this grace. Amen.

+ Thomas John Paprocki

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BISHOP PAPROCKI'S PUBLIC SCHEDULE

Monday, March 19

CHICAGO, UNITED CENTER, INVOCATION FOR THE CHICAGO BLACKHAWK ALUMNI ASSOCIATION SCHOLARSHIP LUNCHEON, 11 A.M.

Tuesday, March 20-

Wednesday, March 21

RAYMOND, MAGNUSON HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTER, SPRING OVERNIGHT GATHERING FOR PRIESTS

Wednesday, March 21

RAYMOND, MAGNUSON HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTER, PRIEST'S PERSONNEL BOARD MEETING, 1 P.M.

Wednesday, March 21

SPRINGFIELD, ST. AGNES PARISH, CONFIRMATION, 7 P.M.

Friday, March 23

JERSEYVILLE, HOLY GHOST CHURCH, CONFIRMATION FOR HOLY GHOST PARISH AND FOR ST. FRANCIS XAVIER PARISH, JERSEYVILLE, 6:30 P.M.

Saturday, March 24

SPRINGFIELD, ST. AGNES CHURCH, ROSARY AND STATIONS OF THE CROSS TO PLANNED PARENTHOOD, 9 A.M.

Sunday, March 25

SPRINGFIELD, CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, PALM

SUNDAY MASS, 10 A.M.

Tuesday, March 27

SPRINGFIELD, CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, HOLY HOUR FOR PRIESTS, 4 P.M.

Tuesday, March 27

SPRINGFIELD, CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, CHRISM MASS, 6:30 P.M.

Thursday, March 29

SPRINGFIELD, CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER, 6:30 P.M.

Friday, March 30

SPRINGFIELD, CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, GOOD FRIDAY LITURGY, 3 P.M.

Saturday, March 31

SPRINGFIELD, CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, BLESSING OF EASTER FOOD, 11 A.M.

Saturday, March 31

SPRINGFIELD, CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, EASTER VIGIL, 8 P.M.

Sunday, April 1

SPRINGFIELD, CATHEDRAL OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION, EASTER SUNDAY MASS, 10 A.M.

Prayer to St. Michael the Archangel

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle.

Be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the Devil. May God rebuke him, we humbly pray, and do thou, O Prince of the heavenly hosts, by the power of God, thrust into hell Satan, and all the evil spirits, who wander about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.